

# THE INDYPENDENT

Issue #96, December 13, 2006 – January 9, 2007 **A FREE PAPER FOR FREE PEOPLE**



FRANK REYNOSO

BY NICHOLAS POWERS

**C**'mon jump," the man yelled to the cop on the roof. It was early Saturday and we were rallying at the 103rd precinct in Jamaica, Queens. On the roof, a cop laughed as black people pointed at him. "C'mon pig, jump," the man next to me taunted. Behind the barricades, the police eyed us. We saw our strength in their fear and wanted to take away the power they had over us – the power of death.

Five cops had used that power on Nov. 25 against three men leaving the Kalua nightclub in Queens. Trent Benefield, Joseph Guzman and Sean Bell were going after two rude-boys who tried to push their way into Bell's bachelor party. Threats were traded each saying they had a gun. Bell told his friends it was time to go.

As they sat in the car, an undercover cop who heard the threats walked up, hand on his

gun. He did not show his badge. He did not say he was police. "He got a gat! Be out!" shouted Guzman. Bell rammed the car forward into a van. Backed up and rammed it again to get away. The cop fired, repeatedly. Soon, other shots echoed in the street.

In the car, glass shattered and their bodies were punched around by bullets. Benefield fell out pleading, "Stop shooting at me!" Inside the car, Bell's neck was shredded. He gasped until he had no more strength to try. The cops stood. They shot 50 bullets at the four men. No gun was found in the car.

The next day, New York read about the killings. After hearing how many shots were fired many of us had the same question. Did they enjoy killing him? Officer Mike Oliver shot 31 times. He shot, reloaded and shot again. When did fear and panic become rage?

What did he see in the darkness of the car that needed to be so destroyed?

## MY DEATH TOO

Bell's funeral was held at Community Church of Christ, where he and his fiancée planned to marry. Church men in dark suits guided us in. "No cameras please," they said and we turned off our cell-phones. A news crew was in line and he shoed them away. "They never came around before," the woman in front of me said. "They don't care about Sean they just here to make money." I hummed agreement.

The line going into the church was black. Across the street, the line of reporters was white. They wanted to wrap him in headlines

and tell us the meaning of his death. We had a different need, it was not to see the body but make him into a symbol of our own.

We entered the rose-scented church and I watched people lay prayer over his face. When I glimpsed him my eyes flinched. It hurt because it was my death too. They shot 50 bullets into the blackness we both share and now, the value of my life depends on the price they pay for his murder. Bell's face was grey and bloated and young. Walking away, I knew whatever is said must bear the weight of his lost life.

Next to the church, media trucks glowed as TV anchors waved their microphones like metal detectors searching for treasure. Activists worked the crowd, handing out flyers. I read one and could feel ambition in the air.

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**www.indypendent.org • nyc.indymedia.org**





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### WHAT IS INDYMEDIA?

With autonomous chapters in more than 150 cities throughout the world, the Independent Media Center is an international network of volunteer media activists.

The IMC seeks to create a new media ethic by providing progressive, in-depth and accurate coverage of issues. We are a community-based organization using media to facilitate political and cultural self-representation. We seek to analyze issues affecting individuals, communities and ecosystems by providing media tools and space to those seeking to communicate. We espouse open dialogue and placing the means of communication and creativity back in the hands of the people, away from the drive of profit.

*The Independent* is funded by benefits, subscriptions, donations, grants and ads from organizations and individuals with similar missions.

### WHAT CAN I DO TO GET INVOLVED?

The IMC has an open door. You can write and distribute for *The Independent*, videotape events and rallies, update the website, self-publish articles to the web, take photos or just help us run the office. As an organization relying on volunteer support, we encourage all forms of participation.

The print team reserves the right to edit articles for length, content and clarity. We welcome your participation in the entire editorial process.

### VOLUNTEER STAFF:

Nicholas Allanach, Chris Anderson, Steve Arnerich, Kazembe Balagun, Gino Barzizza, Charlie Bass, Bennett J. Baumer, Leila Binder, Jed Brandt, Mike Burke, Jessie Carpenter, Antrim Caskey, Susan Chenelle, Orly Clergé, Ellen Davidson, Lauren Denitzio, Ryan Dunsmuir, Jeff Faerber, David Ferris, Karen Fu, Leo Garcia, Neela Ghoshal, Lauren Giambrone, Antonio Golan, Liana Grey, A.K. Gupta, Irina Ivanova, Ruth Kelton, Ula Kuras, Jessica Lee, Gary Martin, Diane Mason, Edgar Mata, Clark Merrefield, Nik Moore, Mary Neglar, Ana Nogueira, Erica Patino, Donald Paneth, Nicholas Powers, Frank Reynoso, Ann Schneider, Andrew Stern, Sarah Stuteville, John Tarleton, Xavier Tayo, Erin Thompson, Chloe Tribich, Matthew Wasserman, Steven Wishnia & Amy Wolf

# COMMUNITY CALENDAR december–january

## DECEMBER

### Ongoing

Weekdays 5–7pm  
DAILY VIGIL FOR BRAD WILL  
Join us to remember our friend and demand justice for his death and for those he walked, learned, and struggled with on the barricades in Oaxaca. Permanent Mission of Mexico to the U.N., \*not\* at the Consulate.  
Info: 44th Street betw. 1st & 2nd Aves.

### EVERY TUESDAY

6 – 7pm  
CHELSEA STANDS UP AGAINST THE WAR.  
For over a year at the northwest corner of 8th Ave. and 24th St., New Yorkers have gathered, rain or shine, to protest the war.  
Chelsea Neighbors United To End The War  
Info: 212-726-1385  
chelseaneighborsunited.org  
join our Listserv:  
ChelseaNeighborsUnited-Subscribe@yahoogroups.com

### THROUGH SUN DEC 31

FREE (weekends only)  
EXHIBITION: THROUGH HER EYES: SOCIALLY CONSCIOUS ARTWORK. Photography from Through Her Eyes, Girls for Gender Equity’s summer photography program for teen women. George Washington Carver Gallery, 677 Lafayette Ave, Bklyn.  
Info: Empress, 347-351-3882, info@ggennyc.org & ggennyc.org

### THU DEC 14

7pm • \$5  
READING: *STATIC: GOVERNMENT LIARS, MEDIA CHEERLEADERS, & THE PEOPLE WHO FIGHT BACK.* w/co-author Amy Goodman of Democracy Now! Shows how the Bush administration has manipulated the news as well as how the corporate media has deceived the public.  
Info: Bluestockings, 172 Allen St. 212-777-6028  
bluestockings.com

### FRI DEC 15

5:30-7:30pm  
HOLIDAY POTLUCK FOR ANTI-RACIST AND SOCIAL JUSTICE ACTIVISTS: Bring a friend, colleague, something to eat

or drink, a poem, a story, a memory, a picture, etc. Come enjoy an evening of cultural sharing. Sponsored by the AntiRacist Alliance at Community Church of NY, Community House Gallery. Info: 28 E 35th St. antiracistalliance.com. 718-918-2716

### 7pm • FREE

SIGNING: ABBY DENSON AND SHANNON O’ LEARY: *SOCIALLY RELEVANT COMICS!* A chance to gab with the authors about comics and their amazing power to entertain as well as help people and animals.  
Info: Bluestockings, 172 Allen St. 212-777-6028, bluestockings.com

### SAT DEC 16

9pm • \$6 • 21 and over  
CHANUKAH BALL: A RADICAL COMMUNITY EVENT, rock show and queer dance party to support the Palestine solidarity work of Jews Against the Occupation NYC. FEATURING: Joe Lally (Fugazi), The Shondes, The Rude Mechanical Orchestra. WITH: MC: Ms. JewSA 2006 and special guests. Vegan Latkes!  
Info: Lit Lounge, 93 2nd Ave. shondes.com/ChanukahBall

### SUN DEC 17

1:30pm  
RALLY/MARCH: RE-ACTION ON BROADWAY, living wages, benefits, and justice for retail workers. Rally begins at 478 Broadway (btw Broome and Grand Streets). Then march up Broadway to 7th St.  
Info: 718-924-4882/347-256-4429 or rap@goles.org.

2pm – 12am • \$5 -\$10 Suggested Donation (no one turned away)  
OAXACA SOLIDARITY BENEFIT/ SOLIDARIDAD CON OAXACA  
Info: Julia de Burgos Cultural Arts Center, 1680 Lexington Ave. (corner of 106th St.) elenemigocomun.net

### MON DEC 18

6:30pm • Free  
FILM: *THE GROUND TRUTH*, a look at the training and dehumanization of U.S. soldiers & their struggle to cope

on returning home.

Info: UFPJ National Office, 261 West 36th St, 7th Fl (via freight entrance). Space limited. Info/RSVP: 212-868-5545, nia@unitedforpeace.org, unitedforpeace.org.

### WED DEC 20

Time TBA • \$8  
Benefit: 7 bands for the NYC AIDS Housing Network. At Marion’s Marquee Lounge, 356 Bowery St.  
Info: 718-802-9540 x16, flynn@nyc-ahn.org, nycahn.org.

### THUR DEC 21

Assemble 12 Noon  
ACTION: DAY OF OUTRAGE – SHUT DOWN WALL STREET! KELLY MUST GO!  
\*BLACK THURSDAY\*  
Info: Chase Building, Liberty & Nassau Sts, 718-398-1766

### SAT DEC 23

6pm • \$15 suggested  
EVENT: DESIS RISING UP & MOVING (DRUM) End of Year Party. Dinner, performances, music, raffle prizes, more.  
Info: At loc in Queens, TBA. Info/RSVP: 718-205-3036, info@drumation.org

### TUE DEC 26

7pm • \$3 – \$5  
PERFORMANCE: WOMEN’S POETRY JAM & WOMEN’S OPEN MIKE featuring Claire Moed and Laura Boss. Come and deliver (up to) 8 minutes of your poetry, prose, songs and spoken word.  
Info: Bluestockings, 172 Allen St. 212-777-6028 • bluestockings.com

### WED DEC 27

12:30pm • Free  
PERFORMANCE: SHARE THE KWANZAA SPIRIT with an interactive dance performance by members of the Seventh Principle Dance Ensemble.  
Info: World Financial Center, 200 Vesey St., 212-417-7000.

### FRI DEC 29

6:30pm • FREE  
LECTURE: “THE SEVEN PRINCIPLES OF KWANZAA” with George Edward Tait, the musician, educator and community activist known as the Poet

Laureate of Harlem.

Info: Dana Discovery Center, inside Central Park at 110th St. between 5th and Lenox Aves.

## MON JAN 1

2pm – midnight • *Free/donations of canned food for City Harvest & books for Books Through Bars.*  
PERFORMANCE/BENEFIT: “EVENT HORIZON: 13TH ANNUAL ALTERNATIVE NEW YEAR’S DAY SPOKEN WORD/ PERFORMANCE EXTRAVAGANZA.” 150 performers including Taylor Mead, Cheryl Boyce Taylor, Bingo Gazingo, Regie Cabico, Rigoberto Gonzalez, Nick Zedd, Penny Arcade w/open mic. Bowery Poetry Club, 308 Bowery St.  
Info: 212-481-8650, miriam@roguescholars.com

## FRI JAN 5

8pm • \$10, \$7.50 students  
FILM: DOROTHY DAY: DON’T CALL ME A SAINT. Tumultuous life of the pacifist-anarchist cofounder of the Catholic Worker movement. Benefits the War Resisters League.  
The Brecht Forum, 451 West St.  
Info: 212-228-0450  
warresisters.org

## SAT JAN 6

8 – 10:30pm • \$12 general/\$9 members suggested.  
MUSIC: PEOPLES’ VOICE CAFE, w/Kim & Reggie Harris; Jon Fromer. The Workmen’s Circle, 45 E 33rd St.  
Info: 212-787-3903, peoplesvoicecafe.org

## SUN JAN 7

FREE • 2pm  
ACTION: MEMORIAL RIDE FOR 2006 FALLEN CYCLISTS. Starting locations TBA in Queens & North Bronx, converging in Manhattan.  
Info: times-up.org or visualresistance.org

## FRI JAN 12

8pm • \$10, \$7.50 students  
FILM: ARLINGTON WEST. Temporary “cemeteries in the sand” created by Veterans for Peace in California, plus short films including “A Nation Rocked to Sleep,” Carly Sheehan’s poem for her fallen brother. Benefits the War Resisters League.  
The Brecht Forum, 451 West St.  
Info: 212-228-0450  
warresisters.org

## letters to the editor

### WBAI: RADICAL RADIO OR NPR-LITE?

Chris Anderson uses news speak (“Trouble on the Airwaves, WBAI Listener Numbers Decline,” issue #95) to disparage WBAI-99.5 FM while implicitly supporting the very people who have injected the racial vitriol into the station. Why doesn’t he cut to the chase?

Steve Brown, the “independent” former ListProg candidate for the station’s listener board says that there is too much black programming and that the station must be tailored to meet the expectations of rich, white liberals. He also says that criticism of Israel, which WBAI is absolutely unique on in NYC, is “anti-Semitic” – in other words, turning off any Zionist funding sources. So – what is it? Should WBAI have programming that aims to reach Black, Latino and working people? Or should it be a progressive station that apes NPR? That’s the discussion. Any “leaked” documents, or facile comparisons between the operating expenses in, say Houston, versus New York are a part of selling the white liberal contingent’s basic political claims without admitting it.

—ANONYMOUS

### REACTION TO BORAT

I was, at first, curious about *Borat* (“The Fake Is Real”, Issue #95). It sounded like brilliant comedy. But increasingly I began to suspect that it was xenophobic toward people of Middle Eastern

descent. In light of the devastation we wreaked in Afghanistan and Iraq, a film ridiculing Muslims is about as funny as a film mocking the Jews during the Holocaust. Its success as a #1 box office hit disturbs me. The film’s caricature of the people of Kazakhstan plucks strings that resonate with that fear. The humor in this film temporarily relieves tension. I think that’s what blackface humor does: emboldens one and, for a moment, removes the pressure of constant fear. But it does not treat the wound, it exacerbates it.

—GAIA THOMAS

Wow, that’s really funny – A British Jew makes fun of backwards, Muslim Central Asians. They are so racist. They are so narrow. They are so homophobic. They are so fucked up. Not like us. We have a sense of humor. Not like them. They get touchy after endless racist bullshit is directed at them. How narrow. How petty. How backwards. Not like us. We get the joke, what’s their problem? I guess it takes real “bravery” to mock Third World peoples while they are getting the shit bombed out of them. Call it satire, but it’s essentially Amos ‘n Andy dressed up for the modern era. It’s an irreverent thread of the same racist cloth. But I guess I’m “easily offended.” Smug hipster racism is the same old shit.

—ANONYMOUS

A lot of people are missing the point of Borat. It is not an attack on Muslims or Middle-Easterners. If anything, it is an attack on Americans. The character’s being Middle-Eastern only serves to maximize the chance that he will be reacted to strongly. Other than this, where Borat is from is irrelevant. I highly doubt that anyone who watches this movie will truly believe the Kazakhs drink out of toilets and have sex with their sisters. The only people who come out of the movie looking badly are the idiots who make racist comments in response to Borat. If there is a complaint to be made, it’s that Cohen chose easy targets and put people into situations in which they could only look bad. Just see the movie for what it is – a mockery of narrow-minded individuals.

—RON



GINO BARZIZZA



# NYPD’S Parade Charade

NEW RULES MAKE IT TOUGHER TO LEGALLY ASSEMBLE



Rev. Billy makes a scene outside police headquarters in advance of the Nov. 27 public hearing debating the NYPD’s proposed parade permit regulations. PHOTO: FREDASKEW.COM

BY CHRIS ANDERSON

Even as public opposition to New York City’s parade requirements continues to mount, the New York Police Department’s proposed rules on legally permitted assembly appear almost certain to go into effect by the end of December. The rules, which would prohibit public gatherings of as few as ten people who do not first obtain a permit from the police, were the subject of a raucous public hearing at Police Headquarters on Monday, Nov. 27. Nearly 150 people, including ten members of New York’s 50-person City Council, attended the meeting to denounce what Councilwoman Gail Brewer (D-Upper West Side) called a “cumbersome and heavy-handed” attempt by the NYPD to limit the “everyday and universally accepted prac-

tices” of ordinary New Yorkers. Although the NYPD withdrew an earlier assembly and parade proposal in August in the face of widespread public outrage, the new rules “are no more reasonable than the first,” and would limit funeral processions, impromptu bike rides of more than 30 people and city walking tours, according to Councilman Tony Avella (D-Bayside). “I urge the department to withdraw the proposed amendments and begin a dialogue with all interested parties to come up with a proposed set of rules which will promote public safety and protect and the rights of citizens to assemble,” noted Avella in his testimony at the hearing. Testimony from Mitchel Cohen of the New York City Green Party lightened what was otherwise a contentious day at Police Headquarters. (see below). According to Assemble for Rights NYC, a coalition of two dozen local activist groups including United for Peace and Justice, the International Action Center, Times Up! and the Center for Constitutional Rights, the process by which the regulations are being implemented is as problematic as the rules themselves, with the NYPD drawing up the very regulations it will be then charged with enforcing. Instead, Assemble For Rights believes that the New York City Council, “as the representatives of the people of the city,” has the authority to make laws affecting the “fundamental rights of New Yorkers.” Assemble for Rights is pushing a proposed amendment to the section of the city’s Administrative Code, “The NYC First Amendment Act,” that would trump the NYPD regulations. There are no hearings on the proposed council bill currently scheduled.

## Finally, a Rule We Can Get Behind!

### TESTIMONY OF MITCHEL COHEN AT NYPD REGS HEARING

My name is Mitchel Cohen, and I’m representing the Brooklyn Greens, a local of the Green Party of New York. I am here to speak IN FAVOR of the proposed changes to the permitting process, which quite reasonably seeks to limit to 30 the number of people in any lawful procession, and after that a permit is required. Yes!!! The police brass finally understand what we meant by “Don’t trust anyone over 30!” No more the 30 smokers milling about in front of restaurants befouling the air – every grouping of smokers must get a permit! Thirty cars driving down Broadway in rush hour – GET A PERMIT OR FACE ARREST! Thirty cadets coming out of the Police Academy on East 20th Street – NO PERMIT, NO GRADUATION! Thirty sailors in Times Square during Meet the Fleet week – GET A PERMIT or back on your boat! I do have some questions, though:

- a) Funeral processions? What if there are 31 cars in the procession to the cemetery? Will the beloved corpse be detained?
- b) What is the length of time in which 30 people must pass through a subway turnstile before a permit can be required?
- c) What is the physical proximity in yardage needed to designate random passersby a “procession” and thus require a permit? What if they are all wearing the same political button?
- d) What if 30 people walk past a checkpoint and they are all smiling – do they require a permit? What if they are whistling, or all wearing the same t-shirt?
- e) What if the musicians in the New York Philharmonic are walking together to perform at the stage in Central Park – can they be considered acting in concert?
- f) Especially in the holiday season, what about 30 Christmas carolers

– OK, no permit needed, right? What if they go from house to house caroling but suddenly switch to antiwar songs, will they need a permit then?

- g) Does the proposed procedure also limit police shootings of African-American males to 30 bullets?
- h) What about those months on the calendar that have exactly 30 days. Do we need to lessen them by at least one day each and then create a new month out of the extra days? Let’s call the new month, for argument’s sake, Thermidor.

I salute the police brass for grabbing the bull by the horns and initiating this important venture. For too long police officials have been forced to sit impotently on the sidelines as the Constitution granted only the elected legislative, executive and judicial officials the power to make the laws that govern us. In my view, it is time for NYPD officials to come out of the closet as the fourth branch of government, to imbue upon themselves the power to make laws and supercede those elected constitutional bodies.

A good beginning occurred when the NYPD brass decided not to permit officers to provide statements after killing a suspect even to internal investigators, until a great deal of time had passed and cover stories could be fabricated and synchronized. That blue wall of silence stands proud and needs to be extended everywhere, like an iron curtain around this city.

That is why all New Yorkers must support this and other measures through which police officials grant themselves the authority to regulate who is and who is not allowed the right to freedom of speech and assembly. Remember 9-11. We’ll show those “terrorists” what real freedom is all about. Thank you very much.



## Green Snare: McGowan Pleads

BY IMC STAFF

The New York environmental and social justice activist Daniel McGowan has pleaded guilty to being involved in a pair of arsons in the Pacifica Northwest linked to the Earth Liberation Front. McGowan and three other activists – Joyanna Zacher, Nathan Block and Jonathan Paul – reached a plea bargain with the government where they took responsibility for the crimes on the condition they would never have to snitch on anyone else involved in the movement. Accused of being domestic terrorists, the four activists could have faced as much as life plus over 1,000 years in prison if convicted at trial – even though no one was injured in their actions. Over the past year, federal agents have arrested at least 15 environmental and animal rights activists in a sweep dubbed the Green Scare. At the Nov. 9 hearing, McGowan read a statement before the court: “... This plea agreement is very important to me, because it allows me to accept full responsibility for my actions and at the same time remain true to my strongly held beliefs. “I hope that you will see that my actions were not those of terrorist but of a concerned young person who was deeply troubled by the destruction of Oregon’s beautiful old-growth forests and the dangers of genetically modified trees. After taking part in these two actions, I realized that burning things down did not fit with my visions or belief about how to create a better world. So I stopped committing these crimes...” “Your Honor, after May of 2001, I put myself back on the path of open and positive activism. Since then I have focused on helping victims of domestic violence, campaigning for the environment, and advocating for prisoners. While my commitment to pursuing a better world has not and will not change, I have changed the way I am pursuing those goals...” McGowan and the three other activists will be sentenced in the spring. The government is seeking a sentence of eight years, while McGowan’s lawyers are arguing for a sentence of no more than five years and three months. The group Friends and Family of Daniel McGowan have urged supporters of McGowan to write letters to the judge (via their lawyers’ office) to urge leniency in his sentencing. For more information the group can be contacted at: friendsofdanielmcg@yahoo.com or at supportdaniel.org.

### ERIC NG 1984-2006

Eric Ng, a 22-year-old NYC Teaching Fellow, anti-war activist and rock musician was killed by a drunk driver on Friday, Dec. 1. Eric was bicycling down the Hudson River Greenway – a car-free space for cyclists, skaters and walkers – when he was hit by 27-year-old Eugenio Cidron in his white BMW. According to police, Cidron had been on the bike path for over a mile. Eric was the third person killed in the area since this summer. A ghost bike and plaque was made by Visual Resistance in his honor. Friends and family bicycled from the site of Eric’s death to St. Mark’s Church, where a memorial was held Dec. 9.



# NYPD Story Full of Holes

BY MIKE BURKE

More evidence has emerged that the New York police department lied about key aspects of the police shooting of Sean Bell in order to justify his killing.

Five undercover police officers fired 50 shots at a car carrying Bell, 23, and two of his friends shortly after they left his bachelor party in Queens on Nov. 25.

Bell was hit by four bullets and died hours before his wedding. His friend Joseph Guzman was hit 11 times and remains hospitalized.

Trent Benefield, who is now in a wheelchair, was hit three times.

Shortly after the shooting, police handcuffed the three injured men even though Bell was close to dying. (Benefield and Guzman were later handcuffed to their hospital beds.)

When police searched the car no weapons were found but they did recover the wedding ring Bell was planning to give his fiancée later that day.

As protests grew over Bell's death, police attempted to justify the shooting by claiming there was a fourth man who fled the car.

In search of this mysterious man, police raided apartments in Queens and arrested several friends of Bell on charges unrelated to the shooting. As part of the dragnet, police arrested the son of Queens pastor Erskine Williams for not paying a \$25 summons. Another friend of Bell's was arrested shortly after attending a protest against Bell's killing.

A law enforcement source told the *Daily News* that on the night of the shooting, police never sent out an alert to search for the fourth man. A police report obtained by the *New York Times* also did not mention the fourth man. Guzman and Benefield have maintained that no one else was in the car.

The police have also said the shooting was justified because Bell attempted to run over a police officer and hit an undercover police vehicle.

But Benefield said Bell began driving erratically only after the shooting began in an effort to escape the barrage of bullets. Benefield said the officers never identified themselves.

According to the internal police report, the police lieutenant in charge of the officers said one of his undercover officers had made eye contact with Bell but the lieutenant couldn't articulate why he believed that Bell knew they were officers.

"We are fed up with empty apologies, slippery explanations and dumb excuses. It's time for accountability at the top," said Hazel Dukes, chairwoman of the state NAACP.

The shooting has also raised numerous questions over police racial profiling, the NYPD's use of undercover special agents and the city's policy allowing undercover officers to drink on the job (at least one of the officers had drank two Heinekens before the shooting).

According to internal NYPD figures, the number of shots fired by officers in incidents in which only the officers fired a weapon has increased by 40 percent since 2004.

The Civilian Complaint Review Board has reported receiving a record number of complaints this year about police misconduct – 3,888 complaints in the first six months, predominantly from African-Americans. Last year blacks filed 57 percent of the complaints – even though they represent less than a quarter of the city's population.

The police department's handling of the case has also resulted in some of the city's largest anti-police brutality protests since the shooting of Amadou Diallo in 1999.

The Rev. Al Sharpton has called for protesters to march down Fifth Avenue from the Plaza Hotel to Herald Square on Saturday, Dec. 16.

"Business will not go on as usual until we get justice for Sean Bell," Sharpton said. "We will be shopping for justice while people go shopping for the holidays."

Dec. 16 marks the fourth birthday of Jada, the oldest daughter of Sean Bell and his fiancée Nicole Paultre.

# The 50 Shots Heard Around

*continued from page 1*

Faces circled the camera light as if to audition for the Revolution. Only a few spots were open and activists who never came to the neighborhood were now speaking for it. A white woman held a sign that read People's Organization for Progress over a man being interviewed. "You don't know Sean Bell," a black woman screamed at her. "I live in an African-American community!" she pleaded and touched her chest. "What! Get out my face," the black woman hollered. "You don't even talk black!" The activist hurried away as curses pelted her. Reporters aimed the lens at the heckler and she took out her camera and took pictures of them.

It began to rain and everyone opened umbrellas. In that silence, the family came out of the church singing Amazing Grace. The pain they sang stunned me. Behind the fence we chanted, "No justice no peace!" Our rage and their sadness rolled back and forth over his coffin as it was lifted in the hearse.

When they drove away, activists and reporters surged into the street. We moved around blindly as if inside a boiling pot. The Bloods showed up and some of us looked at each other with the same question. Finally I asked, "Don't they kill black men?" A black couple raised their eyebrows and shook their heads. "Not all the time," a man scolded me, "They're lost and need direction."

## 50 SHOTS, 50 DAY BOYCOTT

A black woman with a camera walked up to the Bloods, "So brothers, what do you have to say about police brutality?" It was her test. What do they say about a death that could so easily have been theirs? The Bloods eyed each other over the red bandannas and stepped back. They had the same awkwardness I had as a boy. In that gesture, I saw how close and far we are from each other.

They were kids and we feared them. Next to me, a Rasta-man intoned "Burn the city down." A black girl looked around in wonder, then at him. "We can't burn the city down," she said. "We got to live here."

Next day, on Saturday Dec. 2, I followed the flyer an activist gave me to the

Kalua night-club. The New Black Panther Party called for a rally at the altar for Sean Bell. Many Panthers are ex-Nation of Islam and their national chairman, Maliki Shabazz, has used his life to complete Malcolm X's half-lived one. Malcolm X wanted to be a lawyer. Shabazz became one. Malcom X died for the Cause. Shabazz would get us to kill for it.

The Panthers used the "Black Power!" war-cry to keep the air warm until Shabazz came. He held a white bullhorn that boomed out his raspy voice. I wondered if he gave it a little gruff to sell the speeches. Performers can't sustain the flow of feeling without being worn down, so they give us the signs of passions without risking health. Except now, it was us at risk. It was our delicate bodies caught in this struggle for power.

cursed a black female cop. "You should be ashamed of yourself for wearing that uniform," he yelled. "A woman should not wear the authority of a man. Read Deuteronomy!" I wanted to ask her how she endured this war for her loyalty but I didn't risk being seen as a traitor.

We gathered in front of the 103rd Precinct. Men took turns hollering through the bullhorn. "Revolutionary greetings," a brother in a leather jacket got up. "We got black men in the army who know how to shoot," he said as his face flushed. "We can get a tank, roll it through here and blow up this police station!" We laughed. He had overstepped the line between fact and fantasy and snapped our suspension of disbelief. Shabazz raised his hand.

"If there are more murders," he aimed

He shot, reloaded and shot again.  
What did he see in the darkness of the car  
that needed to be so destroyed?

"We don't need a permit," Shabazz challenged. "How are you going to ask permission from the very people who are killing you?"

We marched down Jamaica Avenue like a river of rage. Shabazz stopped us in the middle of the street. "We have to hit them where it hurts," he pointed at the stores, "50 shots, 50 day boycott! Don't buy from these stores!" People stared from sidewalks, wanting to join but were too weighed down by shopping bags.

The power of the march got to some. A Blood turned to a white female cop, "You a bitch yo, yeah you cop, SUCK MY DICK!" I saw her eyes lock and arms tighten. Another brother, eyes flashing like knives

the bullhorn at the cops, "We will kill you!" It was dangerous theater. Fear and excitement pulsed through us like a heartbeat. No one wanted to get beaten or arrested and no one wanted to seem weak. He pulled us back from the momentary dizziness. "But we are disciplined," Shabazz assured the crowd. In the back, I sighed.

In the headiness a Blood and a Crip were hoisted on the shoulders of the Panthers and embraced, their arms like stitches over the wound made by 50 bullets. I put down my pen. The whole day, I kept my hands busy taking notes when they shouted "Black Power!" I knew enough history to be suspicious. Usually,

## TIME AFTER TIME

*New York City Councilmember Letitia James is calling for a special agency to be formed to investigate every police killing in the city. According to the October 22 Coalition to Stop Police Brutality, the police have killed 131 people since the shooting of Amadou Diallo in 1999.*

*The vast majority of the victims have been African-American men.  
The list includes:*

March 1, 2000 — March 16, 2000 —



**MALCOLM FERGUSON, 23**, who had been captured by Fox 5 news cameras being arrested during a protest following Diallo's death, was shot in the head by police. He died just blocks from where Diallo was killed in the Bronx. Police said the shooting was accidental and no charges were filed.

**PATRICK DORISMOND, 26**, was fatally shot in the chest by a police officer in midtown. The Haitian immigrant was shot after an undercover police officer stopped him and asked him where he could purchase marijuana in the area. A scuffle broke out and the unarmed Dorismond was shot. To justify the shooting, Mayor Giuliani released Dorismond's sealed juvenile arrest record. The city then sent hundreds of police officers dressed in riot gear to patrol Dorismond's funeral. Police assaulted and pepper-sprayed mourners. A grand jury chose not to indict.





# The City

## SEAN BELL SHOOTING SHAKES CITY; FURTHER UNREST LOOMS

“Black Power” became the personal power of which every leader who called for it. Except now, for this, I held up my fist too.

I wondered what permanent good would we achieve? And not just this one but all the marches that began at Bell’s death. What would change at the end of it and what would be the price? Later that night, I received a call from the New Black Panther Party secretary. His voice had the eager sincerity of someone trying to catch up to their ideals. We rapped for an hour. I told him some of the rage was ugly and silly. “I feel you,” he conceded. “Some of it was fucked.”

### “KELLY MUST GO!”

He said our people were mentally poisoned but we could recover. “Your melanin makes you morally superior to the white man,” he cooed. “It’s just not in their nature, brother.” I was silent. “Brother man, c’mon,” he said, “You know this.” I looked at my yellow hand and wondered how prone my body was to sin. I thought about all my wrongs of just the past week and laughed. I thought about the past year and stopped. Are we so broken, I thought, we need Black Nationalist rhetoric to love each other?

“Holiness isn’t for everyone,” I said. We hung up but the euphoria of togetherness lingered. I shook my head and one of my dreadlocks fell down. Am I my brother’s keeper? I tugged on it like a chain.

On Dec. 6 at Foley Square cops set up a maze of barricades and squeezed people into a pen. Inside, hundreds of protestors shook the air with “Kelly must go!” If Sean Bell became the symbol of black innocence, Police Commissioner Ray Kelly became a symbol of white racism. Neither was the truth of the man but a crime had been committed and we needed a target. Ideas are not as satisfying to destroy as a man.

In the crowd, smaller stages were carved out by the camera light. Black Israelites in Egyptian costume talked of the Original Black Man as a man in camouflage yelled repeatedly, “Daniel in da’ Lion’s Den!” Communists wove through the crowd, holding their newspapers. Most of the audience was youth with no ideological loyalty. Our color was our cause. A man was selling pan-African flags. I bought one and waved it to save my voice from yelling.

“We’re marching!” someone shouted as

the crowd walked to the street. A wall of police stood grim faced, arms crossed. “Go back to Long Island pigs!” young men cackled. They held a banner with the spray-painted slogan “Police Number #1 Enemy” that tilted back and forth over the police and protesters arguing.

The police crumbled and the march moved. A helicopter chopped the sky as we banged drums and chanted “Fuck the Police!” In the light of the helicopter we became black silhouettes indistinguishable from one another.

We escaped the maze of police barricades and marched into the larger maze of the city. I looked at the buildings around us, where money traveled through electronic signals far above our heads. In these streets half of black and Latino children don’t graduate from high school and half will be unemployed as adults. Generations have been abandoned by the city and herded by police into prisons. I stared at the lights and remembered Shabazz calling for revenge, the Rev. Al Sharpton for a federal investigation and Charles Barron for community control over police. Would any of it change the historical forces that kept these buildings lit and their doors closed?

After the march, we gathered near the banner. Barron came out and spoke. “Remember,” he said, tapping the end of the sentence with his finger. “On December 21st, we shut down Wall Street!” Cameras lit Barron as if he was a statue. While leaving, revolutionaries hollered into microphones, heating up rhetoric to keep the night from going cold with silence. Two men walked by me, one had communist leaflets crumpled in his hand. “How they trying to tell me about the truth,” he said. “Nigga, I’ve been living this for 20 years!”

In his complaint, I saw the white left and black radicals struggling over Sean Bell’s name. A new movement was in the streets. But the direction it would take is unknown and the divisions within it are already clear. What will happen as the winter comes? Will Bell’s murder become layered over by snow and gift wrap? Or will black people go on a consumer fast and not buy from white-owned stores? I held the pan-African flag in my hands and swore to follow the boycott. Yet a part of me wondered, what am I really buying into?



Mourners including friends, family and activists gather at Sean Bell’s funeral at the church where he and his fiancée planned to marry. PHOTO: DENNIS HO



Protesters march in Jamaica, Queens near the nightclub where Bell was killed. PHOTO: FREDASKEW.COM

### May 16, 2003

**ALBERTA SPRUILL, 57**, died in her Harlem apartment after police conducted a pre-dawn raid. Police detonated a concussion grenade and handcuffed Spruill before realizing they had the wrong apartment. Spruill went into cardiac arrest and died. The raid occurred as she was preparing to go to the city job she had held for 29 years. The NYPD had secured a no-knock warrant on her apartment based on information provided by a criminal informant.



### May 22, 2003

**OUSMANE ZONGO, 43**, was killed during a police raid on a Chelsea warehouse suspected of being a center of CD and DVD pirating. Zongo, an African arts trader from Burkina Faso, worked on his craft in the building. Undercover officer Bryon Conroy chased Zongo into a dead end and shot him four times, twice in the back. Zongo was unarmed, and was not connected to the pirating. Conroy was tried for manslaughter, but a mistrial was declared.

### January 24, 2004

**TIMOTHY STANSBURY, JR., 19**, was shot by a police officer as he was climbing a staircase to an apartment roof in Bedford-Stuyvesant. The unarmed teenager was shot in the chest by a police officer who never identified himself. Stansbury was heading to a party carrying a stack of CDs. Police Commissioner Ray Kelly admitted there was no justification for the shooting but a state grand jury declined to indict the police officer.







## Indy Readers Fight Back

It pays to read the *The Independent* – just ask beleaguered Brooklyn tenants fighting mass eviction and the “demolition” of their affordable homes.

This past summer, Brooklyn Heights tenant Barbara Callender read a syndicated version of *The Tenants' Voice* about phony demolitions, in *Tenant/Inquilino*, the paper of Met Council on Housing, a city-wide tenant union. The column explained how landlords are increasingly using a loophole in the rent laws to do gut renovations and call them demolitions – allowing the eviction of tenants and de-regulation of affordable apartments.

Once tenants have been evicted from a building, its value skyrockets. Developers are free to remodel apartments and jack up the rents. Phony demolitions are a bureaucratic backdoor to evicting tenants and raising rents. In the past, a demolition meant razing a building. Phony demolitions often leave roofs, walls and even entire floors intact.

The Penson Companies bought Callender's building along with four other buildings in Park Slope and Brooklyn Heights for \$7.9 million dollars. Months later the company applied to the state housing agency, the Division of Housing and Community Renewal (DHCR) to demolish the three buildings on State Street in Brooklyn Heights and the two in Park Slope. Under Gov. Pataki the DHCR has been pro-landlord through changing the rent laws and many landlords are taking note; these buildings are the first phony demolition cases in Brooklyn.

“I read the demolition papers late at night and I thought, oh my God the landlord is going to get us out of here,” Callender said. “The very next morning I called Met Council.”

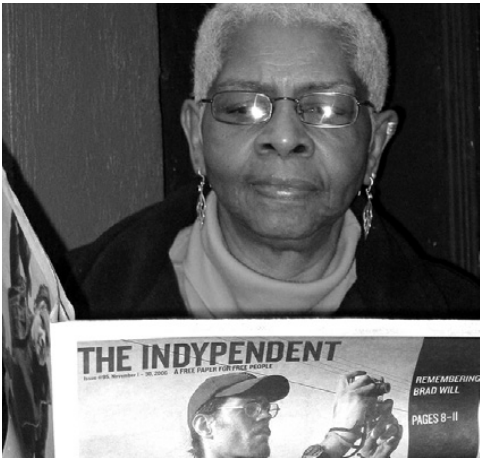
Callender and her dozen or so neighbors formed a tenants' association and devised a strategy. They found a curious name on the mortgage of their buildings and some of the demolition applications – Frank A. Farricker. Farricker, a vice president in the company, lost a bid for Connecticut State Senate in tony Greenwich, CT. He ran as a Democrat who advocated for affordable housing, but what Farricker said in Connecticut was different from his actions in Brooklyn. Numerous newspapers including the *New York Times* picked up the story and the candidate and his company felt the heat.

“Are we going to turn it into luxury housing? Of course it's going to be luxury housing. The inference that my company is going to go in with lawyers and tough guys and tell them they have to get out is untrue,” Farricker said in the *Greenwich Time*.

The heat got so hot that Farricker had to leave the kitchen. Farricker lost the election by a six to four margin and claims he lost his job at the Penson Companies because of the negative press. But the Penson Company isn't stopping. It filed demolition applications with a sixth Brooklyn building and sent letters to tenants asserting their right to evict and demolish.

The Brooklyn tenants, however, are not rolling over. Their newly-formed tenants' association goes before the community board later this month and elected officials have written letters of support.

For assistance with a housing problem call Met Council on Housing at (212) 979-6238.



Brooklyn resident Barbara Callender organized a tenant association after reading *The Independent*. PHOTO: BB



JOSE CARMONA

BY CLARK MERREFIELD

When one of the 100,000 people that pass through Rikers Island each year enters an HIV/AIDS counseling session, his sexual history is reviewed, his mental preparation to receive a positive result is assessed, and, just in case, he is given the necessary tools to engage in high-risk activities more safely. When test results are revealed, the Rikers counselors, through their years of experience, are equipped to deal with a patient's grief, happiness, or, on occasion, rage.

“They tell us the deepest, darkest corners of what's inside,” counselor Mindy Venetek said.

On Nov. 7, 2006, the eleven HIV/AIDS counselors at Rikers were notified by the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) that in a month specialized HIV/AIDS counseling at Rikers would become obsolete. The counselors were given two options: attend additional training, take on additional responsibilities besides counseling and do weekend work, or lose their jobs.

“To see the city do what they're about to do breaks my heart,” Venetek said. According to the counselors, the Department of Health's decision to require nurses, physicians and new staff to take on counseling responsibilities means the inmate population and the general public will be put at risk.

Much of the population at Rikers is transient and not incarcerated for violent crimes. According to the U.S. Bureau of Justice, 1.9 percent of inmates in state prisons were diagnosed with HIV in 2004, nearly five times the rate of HIV infection among the general population. HIV positive inmates in New York represented 7 percent of the total number of positive inmates nationwide in 2004, the highest such percentage in the country but down from 7.6 percent in 2003.

When inmates are released, the counselors feel it is important they have a good sense of what it means to be HIV positive because, “it can be your sister, your mother, your father who they date,”

counselor Maritza Quinones said.

Rikers' staff is employed by Prison Health Services, a for-profit company based in Tennessee that renewed its relationship with the city last year by signing a three-year, \$300 million contract. According to the Department of Corrections and the DOHMH, the decision to eliminate counseling at Rikers was solely the Department of Health's.

Louise Cohen, DOHMH deputy commissioner of health care access and improvement, said the decision represents a step toward normalizing HIV/AIDS care, by increasing the number of tests given and moving away from employees whose only function is HIV/AIDS counseling.

“I think the department, just like the [Centers for Disease Control] and many other health care organizations around the country are moving towards making HIV counseling and testing a routine part of medical care,” Cohen told *The Independent*.

“There's nothing routine about HIV,” Rikers HIV/AIDS counselor Linda Glover said. “If you have high cholesterol, you can't give it to someone else.”

The decision to streamline HIV/AIDS counseling with other healthcare is part of an overall shift in the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene away from the standard of pre-test counseling and written, informed consent. Last year, redactions to New York State Article 27F would have eliminated pre-test counseling altogether and reduced the necessary consent to oral. Although the changes were approved by Mayor Bloomberg, they did not make it to vote in the New York State Assembly.

Romeo Sanchez, a former inmate currently working with the New York City AIDS Housing Network, said that adding staff and increasing the number of HIV tests given might on the surface seem logical, but will ultimately lead to a deterioration of care.

“To offer rapid testing upon intake at Rikers, I don't think is the most effective way to provide services,” he said, adding

# Breaking the News

## PRISON HIV COUNSELORS FACE NEW CHALLENGES

that after being on a bus and being held in a bullpen, inmates are not in a proper state of mind to deny or confirm HIV/AIDS testing.

The Gay Men's Health Crisis in October released a statement in response to proposals to expand HIV testing. In it, the GMHC maintained that pre-test counseling should remain the standard.

“Given the realities of our environments, it is imperative for someone about to take an HIV test to understand the implications of the test and its results,” the statement said. “Maintaining counseling will not only help individuals cope with the test results if positive, but also help people who test negative stay negative.”

The city may also run into problems from other Rikers staff. One Rikers nurse, Ivy Florent, said she is unwilling to do work she feels full-time counselors are better able to provide.

“We can't do inmate counseling like they do, that's all they do,” she said. “The reason the [counseling] department was formed was because we didn't have the time.”

It is unclear whether Florant's position represents a consensus or minority, but the counselors said they were hearing similar things from other nurses and doctors at Rikers.

Most of the counselors will take the DOHMH's deal and keep working at Rikers, though perhaps not by choice.

“To me it was an ultimatum, either take it or have no job, have no benefits,” counselor Elizabeth Ortega said.

Glover signed up for a weekend culinary school before she was notified of the decision, and if she accepts her new position at Rikers she will be required to do weekend work. Though the thirty-year nursing veteran is proud of the good she feels she's done at Rikers, she is now unsure whether her goal of graduating culinary school will be realized.

“After all the years of service that we've given, this is what we get,” she said.

Calls to Prison Health Services and the Department of Corrections were referred to the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene.



# Troops Out, Oil Companies In?

BY TOM HAYDEN

Recommendations 62 and 63 of the Iraq Study Group (ISG) Report confirm that control of Iraqi oil is a fundamental premise of Administration policy. This was denied in the first years of the war, but President Bush recently confirmed his belief that Islamic extremists will “gain access to vast oil reserves and use Iraq as a base to overthrow moderate governments all across the broader Middle East.” Then James Baker revealed the interest of his longtime oil industry allies, as well as key financial and corporate interests, in an Iraq resolution favorable to their narrow interests.

Recommendation 62 says the U.S. government should help draft an oil law that “creates a fiscal and legal framework for investment.” It further recommends that the U.S., in conjunction with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), should “press Iraq to continue reducing subsidies in the energy sector...until Iraqis pay market prices for oil products...” That is, in a country besieged by civil war, bombings of infrastructure, unemployment at 50 percent levels and the lack of necessities, the Baker report proposes to make everyday life harder for average Iraqis so that the oil industry profits.

Recommendation 63 says the U.S. should “assist” Iraqi leaders in privatizing the national oil industry into a “commercial enterprise” to encourage investment by the multinational oil companies.

Who said it was not about blood for oil?

There’s more to uncover. But at this point we know that the Baker commission is sprinkled with heavyweights from oil, construction and financial entities with interests in Iraq. Baker is a Texas oilman whose law firm has interests in debt repayment to Kuwait and other Gulf States. The expert working groups for the ISG include leaders of Bechtel, PFC Energy and two representatives of Citigroup, Inc., the firm of Robert Rubin, leading neo-liberal advocate and Treasury Secretary under Bill Clinton.

Not a single person from the peace movement, women’s, environmental, civil rights or labor organizations were among the “expert” consultants listed in the ISG Report, although the conservative Heritage Foundation and the American Enterprise Institute were there.

The Report acknowledges that “senior members of Iraq’s oil industry” argue for a nationalized oil company to centralize and allocate revenues fairly by region and group. But the Baker team dismisses any such idea on grounds that simply favor private multinationals. They approve of “aggressive” Kurdish investment deals with oil companies in northern Iraq, and note that Shi’a leaders are reported to be negotiating for foreign oil companies as well.

The Sunni armed nationalist groups have consistently stood for the Iraqi right to control Iraqi oil, while also offering a generous role for American contractors and corporations in their vision of the future.

All this suggests that the ideological goal of the US invasion was not simply to dis-

place Saddam Hussein but to dismantle the Arab nationalist state as a whole, opening the oil fields to private penetration. It is even possible that the grand alliance behind the Baker report includes support for U.S. military disengagement in exchange for permanent guarantees that privatize the second largest oil fields on the planet.

As for the peace movement, it has been hobbled by the lack of a powerful alliance, both organizational and organic, with the anti-globalization movement which has fought the global IMF and WTO privatization plans, and the environmental groups battling global warming and greenhouse emissions. Without those unifying linkages, the peace movement has been limited mainly to demands for U.S. troop withdrawals, an effort that has had an enormous impact.

What if the endgame is U.S. combat troops out, U.S. multinational corporations in? What if James Baker is remembered as the peacemaker, if not the leader of the peace movement?

While pushing hard for the removal of troops, it might not be too late to broaden and connect the peace movement more closely with other social movements as the historic debate accelerates about the lessons of the war for our country’s future memory.

*Tom Hayden was a leader of the antiwar movement during the Vietnam era.*

*A version of this article appeared on common-dreams.org.*

## World briefs

### GERMANY ASKED TO INDICT RUMSFELD FOR WAR CRIMES

The Center for Constitutional Rights has renewed its request to a German prosecutor to apply the law of universal jurisdiction over war crimes and prosecute American officials for its policies of torture and detention at Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib. Besides Donald Rumsfeld, the complaint identifies General Geoffrey Miller, Lt. Gen. Ricardo Sanchez, Atty Gen. Alberto Gonzales, Jay Bybee and John Yoo as responsible for developing the policies that lead to human rights abuses. Janis Karpinski, a former commanding officer at Abu Ghraib, has agreed to testify against her superiors. Rumsfeld’s resignation increases the likelihood that Germany will now take jurisdiction of the case. The fact that Congress recently gave immunity to U.S. officials for war crimes is an additional reason why Germany may decide to take the case.

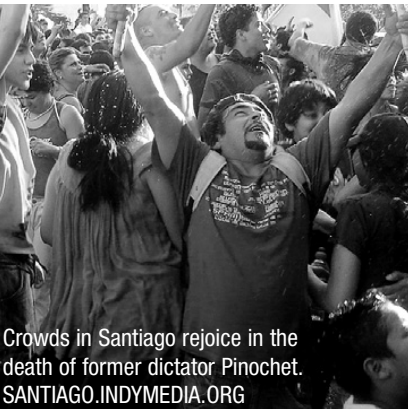
### U.S. MAY HAVE TO TURN OVER ITS EMBASSY TO PAY DAMAGES OWED IN IRAN

An Iranian court has awarded damages to a businessman who was illegally abducted by United States Customs officers 14 years ago. Hossein Alikhani won an award of \$500 million dollars. The U.S. must pay up within ten days or else turn over its assets including the U.S. Embassy in Tehran. The U.S. argued that the Vienna Convention shields the Embassy from judgment. But the plaintiff noted that the 1996 Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act repealed this type of immunity for countries the U.S. designates as terrorist. Alikhani decided to sue after the U.S. sued Iran for hostage-taking in Lebanon in the 1980’s.

### GOOD MONTH FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

In addition to the death of Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet, this month saw the death of Jeanne Kirkpatrick, the first woman to serve as U.S. ambassador to the U.N. She died on Dec. 7 at the age of 80.

Kirkpatrick was famous at the U.N. for her defense of America’s right-wing anticommunist allies, among them Israel’s 1982 invasion of Lebanon; murder and torture carried out by Latin American military regimes, and South Africa’s suppression of its black majority. She was an early pioneer of the neoconservative ideal that right-wing authoritarian governments are much better bets for conversion to democracy than left-wing totalitarian ones.



Crowds in Santiago rejoice in the death of former dictator Pinochet. SANTIAGO.INDYMEDIA.ORG

### NEW STUDY PREDICTS ICE-FREE ARCTIC OCEAN

A recent study analyzing the effects of global warming on sea ice, published in the journal, *Geophysical Research Letters*, predicts that the Arctic Ocean’s summers may be without ice by 2040. The estimated year is decades sooner than previous studies have indicated. The new research concluded that by 2040 only a small amount of sea ice will remain along the north coasts of Greenland and Canada with the rest of the ocean remaining ice-free throughout the summer season. Without sea ice the ocean loses its reflective properties and instead of sending the sun’s energy back into the atmosphere absorbs the sun’s rays causing accelerated global warming.

# Bolton Hits the Road



LAUREN DENITZIO

BY DONALD PANETH

UNITED NATIONS, N.Y.—John R. Bolton was known at the United Nations as the “Human Wrecking Ball.”

Paradoxically, during his residence as United States ambassador to the U.N., Bolton achieved nothing. He stood out among the often somnambulist members of the diplomatic corps as the most undistinguished of nonentities.

Bolton wasn’t even particularly obnoxious in his statements here, or noisy, as everyone had feared he would be, just out of his depth. He didn’t have the vaguest idea of what the U.N. is, how it works, its Charter – and he certainly was not eloquent in support of international peace and security.

He vetoed a couple of U.N. Security Council resolutions critical of Israel, and he shepherded through a resolution imposing sanctions on nuclear North Korea which would never be enforced. He reduced the final declaration of a U.N. Summit on U.N. reform and other matters to the lowest common denominator.

Bolton hid behind his moustache – and President George W. Bush.

He had served as undersecretary of state for arms control which he, himself, had said he did not believe in.

Before his nomination as U.N. ambassador, Bolton also had said that “If the U.N. Secretary [sic] building in New York lost 10 stories, it wouldn’t make a bit of difference” and “If I were redoing the Security Council, I’d have only one permanent member: the United States.” According to Bolton, “treaties are ‘law’ only for U.S. domestic purposes” and on that basis, he concluded that the U.S. had no obligation to pay its U.N. dues.

Bush couldn’t get Bolton’s nomination through the Senate in spring 2005. In the summer, he named him to the post in a recess appointment not requiring Senate approval. After his arrival here, U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan chastised Bolton for trying to “intimidate” him.

Bolton resigned Dec. 4. The Secretary-General was discreet. “Bolton did the job he was expected to do,” Annan said. “He pressed ahead with the instructions he had been given.”

Like most Americans, he never thought his own thoughts.



BRAD WILL UPDATE

# Murder Cover-up in Mexico

BY CHRIS ANDERSON

Nearly two months after Brad Will was gunned down on the streets of Oaxaca City while chronicling a popular revolution against the State governor, and more than two weeks after that uprising suffered a brutal wave of repression, the investigation into the murder of the NYC Indymedia journalist appears to be hostage to internal Mexican politics.

In the weeks following the Nov. 25 arrest or disappearance of dozens of leaders of the Popular Assembly of the Peoples of Oaxaca (APPO), the umbrella organization coordinating protests against governor Ulises Ruiz (see the article at right), Mexican authorities announced they were federalizing the investigation into Will's murder. The original investigation, controlled by Oaxacan Prosecutor General Lizbeth Caña Cadeza, had become the subject of controversy following a bizarre Nov. 15 press conference in which Caña and other forensic officials alleged that the IMC journalist was murdered by members of APPO, the very group Will had traveled to Oaxaca to help.

The theory put forward by the Prosecutor General contradicts on-scene media footage and eyewitness testimony indicating Will was killed by paramilitaries aligned with Governor Ruiz. APPO officials were quick to dismiss the allegations. "It seems a very clear fabrication and a stupid way of trying to blame the protesters," charged APPO spokesperson Florentino Lopez on Nov. 16.

Independent journalist John Gibler has gathered extensive evidence which seems to support APPO's position. "I've interviewed several people directly connected to the investigation, as well as the doctor who conducted Brad's autopsy, and I've gotten a lot of evidence that they [the Oaxaca state government] has lied in multiple cases," Gibler told *Democracy Now!* on Dec. 6.

Nevertheless, on Dec. 1 Oaxacan authorities quietly released the only two men charged with Will's murder, citing a lack of evidence against them. Both men, local PRI officials, had been photographed carrying automatic weapons and firing into the crowd at the barricade where Will was killed.

Now that the Mexican Government has, at least temporarily, smothered the uprising in Oaxaca City, federal officials are moving to give the appearance of an impartial investigation into the killing. The *San Jose Mercury News* reported on Dec. 6 that "amid pressure from U.S. diplomats and family members of slain filmmaker Brad Will, federal prosecutors in Mexico are taking over the investigation into the American's death."

On Dec. 8, the newspaper *El Universal* reported that Federal Police (PFP) had stormed Cana's office, detaining five policemen, seizing weapons, and sending dozens more State troops fleeing. A high level official with the PFP told *El Universal* that "the confiscated firearms would be tested for possible connections to shootings" that have left anywhere from nine to 19 persons involved in the protests dead.

But developments in the murky world of Mexican politics, little understood by many Americans, also appear to be driving events in Oaxaca. On Dec. 8, *El Universal* reported that State legislators from the PRD and PAN, often at odds, walked out of the state congressional chamber as Prosecutor Caña was giving an address. "The two parties claim Caña has been tapping their phones, and they called for her resignation," the paper reported.

Americans close to Will appear to be of two minds about the recent developments. "From our standpoint, to get an impartial investigation it needs to move to the federal level," Will's sister, Wendy Will, told the *San Jose Mercury News* on Dec. 6.

But other activists see little reason to cheer. "There's no way the Mexican government is ever going to properly investigate the death of a man who was probably killed by figures close to that very government," one local activist told *The Independent*. "And even if they do, the investigation could last only as long as the next political compromise. The only justice Brad would have wanted is the success of the Oaxaca rebellion. And the situation in Oaxaca is incredibly grim."

MEXICO

# Scores Jailed, Tortured in Repression of Oaxaca Uprising

BY JAMES DARIA

OAXACA—Federal police are continuing to carry out house raids and use violence and other intimidation tactics against members of the Popular Assembly of the Peoples of Oaxaca (APPO) in an effort to crush the ongoing popular uprising against Oaxaca's governor, Ulises Ruiz Ortiz.

"To belong to an organization or simply to think differently than the government now means that you are committing a crime," said recent state university graduate María, whose name had to be changed in order to protect her identity. She said that many members of her family are now in hiding because they participated in the popular movement to protest the level of corruption and lack of transparency that has been the hallmark of Governor Ruiz's government. "They (the protesters) haven't killed anyone, they haven't burned down buildings, they haven't robbed, they have simply protested."

Following APPO's seventh "mega-march" on Nov. 25, federal police detained a total of 142 people, 107 men and 35 women including three juveniles. According to the Mexican League in Defense of Human Rights, the arrests were carried out violently and many suffered torture while detained in local prisons. On Nov. 27, the 142 prisoners were taken to an all-male medium security prison in the northern Mexican state of Nayarit. They were taken outside the state supposedly due to their profile as "extremely dangerous."

The federal troops used the large march and the resulting street fight as the pretext to implement a zero tolerance policy against the movement in order to restore order at all costs before Dec. 1 when Mexico's new president Felipe Calderon was sworn into office, amidst accusations of electoral fraud. The inauguration did not end the state-sponsored violence.

The following week, federal police continued house raids. Arrest warrants were issued for all members of the General Council of the APPO. Meanwhile, various local and state police departments roamed the city in heavily armed squadrons of plain-clothed officers in un-marked trucks without license plates.

The fear and paranoia have heightened to such an extent that the APPO leadership and many people who had peacefully participated in the popular movement have fled the city in fear of being jailed, disappeared, tortured or killed.

María said that a cousin and her boyfriend participated in the occupation of University Radio — the movement's medium of communication — until they were informed that their names were included on the list compiled by the government. Under the cover of darkness on Nov. 25, María said members of her family pulled up in a car in the back of the university and quickly escorted the demonstrators outside of the city. Upon arriving at her boyfriend's house in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, a long drive of approximately eight hours, they found the house burnt to the ground. Other members of her family are now in hiding.

So few people remained in the barricade to protect University Radio that the station was eventually turned over to the federal forces. The Oaxacan governor announced that no amnesty would be granted for anyone involved in the conflict.

Broadcasters on the pro-government Citizen Radio called for the lynching of anyone involved in the popular movement. Listeners called the station to help identify their neighbors who participated in barricades and marches.

The climate of fear and repression intensified as police began to target teachers and search for them in their schools while classes were in session. Armed paramilitaries kidnapped at least one university student at gunpoint in front of the College of Medicine.

María said her uncle, a teacher in the Section 22 of the National Union of Education Workers and supporter of APPO, was recently pursued while leaving school by two trucks of presumably armed plain-clothes police officers. Upon leaving the school, a fellow co-worker called him on his cellular phone to alert him to the people pursuing him. The teacher accelerated and made a u-turn in an attempt to escape, but the two trucks did the same in order to follow him. He quickly returned



**APPO AND PFP BATTLE IN OAXACA AFTER MARCH:** Police and APPO protesters have fought in central Oaxaca city throughout the past two months. After a peaceful march, tens of thousands reached Oaxaca's city center, police and protesters clashed in the streets, police discharged heavy amounts of tear gas, protesters threw rocks and shot bottle rockets through plastic tubes. By nightfall the police had forced the APPO to retreat. PHOTO: JOHN GIBLER

## In 2006, grassroots and social movements carried out some of the most ambitious and creative acts of resistance in Mexican history.



**(TOP) OCT. 29:** "I am not from any political party, only from the party of the oppressed," said a women identifying herself as Paz, a 48-year-old preschool teacher who stood in the line of women. "And when you have conviction, you won't be scared by police batons."

**(BOTTOM) NOV. 5:** Federal police put up razor wire around the zocalo in Oaxaca City. PHOTOS: JOHN GIBLER

# Ready To Fight

BY JOHN GIBLER

UNDERDOGS OF MEXICAN LEFT GATHER MOMENTUM

On Dec. 1 one president — appointed by a stacked electoral tribunal — slipped into the Mexican Congress through the back door for a four-minute inauguration ceremony held on a dais occupied by the conservative National Action Party (PAN) and suited Secret Service agents, while a second president — self-appointed in a massive rally in Mexico City — led a tame protest march to a prepackaged stage and sound system waiting in front of the police barricade half a mile away from the march's proclaimed destination.

Both in congress and on the streets, December 1 was a show. The two strongest electoral forces in the country, the PAN and the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), fought for the image of legitimacy. Both lost. The former dinosaur of Mexican political power, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), didn't even try; the PRI was nowhere to be seen on Dec. 1.

Behind the parties, two men sought to appeal to the masses watching through the lenses of Televisa and TV Azteca, Mexico's national television networks.

President Felipe Calderon stood amongst his huddle of senators and bodyguards to receive the presidential sash with an unpracticed stone face fit for a junior high yearbook. Off camera, Secret Service agents held PRD senators against the wall. Arnold Schwarzenegger, guest of Calderon and decoy used to divert press attention from the PRD protests inside the chambers, commented to Ioan Grillo from the Associated Press that the scene had "good action."

Out in the streets, the "legitimate president," as supporters now call him, Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador shouted, waved his arms, and pointed his finger with the uncertain fury of someone trapped in perpetual candidacy. His large — though smaller than usual — crowd of supporters hung on his every word and obeyed his every command. "I don't want one wall painted on, nor one window broken," he told the crowd before the march, "I want everything in order." The crowd obeyed, engaging a well-behaved march and rally that did not get within sight of its goal: Calderon's gathering with foreign dignitaries in the National Auditorium.

The parties concluded both ceremonies and protests before lunchtime. Mexico's brief experiment with electoral legitimacy ended on Dec. 1, six years after President Vicente Fox's inauguration interrupted 71 years of continuous PRI rule. Felipe Calderon stepped into the presidency — guarded and through the backdoor — with the weakest mandate in history. Even according to the discredited official results, Calderon won by half a percentage point. Lopez Obrador turned a massive movement organized to protest the vote-count irregularities into a political charade after the electoral tribunal denied his recount demand, coralling hundreds of thousands of supporters

into Mexico City's Plaza de la Constitución, or Zócalo, only to have them raise their hands in support of his proposed "legitimate government."

### RIISING UP

But just as Mexico's system of electoral representation eroded into a stage act with two presidents and a congress engaged in shoving matches and fist fights, the country's grassroots social movements stepped in to fill the vacuum of legitimacy, carrying out in 2006 some of the most ambitious and creative acts of resistance in Mexican history.

The Zapatista Army of National Liberation began the year launching its Other Campaign, a national listening tour to gather voices and stories of resistance and autonomy from the forgotten corners of the country, and thus set in motion a process of joining anti-capitalist left movements into a national organization, a coming together that does not flatten the rich diversity of the left or subordinate any one organization or cause to another. As usual, the idea behind the Zapatista initiative — uprooting capitalism and the political class that sustains it — was quixotic and highly energizing, pulling tens of thousands of people to participate in the town hall meetings across the country.

The Oaxaca state local of the National Union of Education Workers, known as Section 22, was next to rise up. On May 22, the union went on strike — something it does every year — to demand better pay and a higher budget for state schools. This year, however, PRI governor Ulises Ruiz Ortiz sent thousands of state riot police in at dawn on June 14 to break the teachers' protest camp, sparking a popular uprising that would defeat the state police forces and use coordinated civil disobedience actions to seize the state government and seek the governor's ouster. The teachers' union convoked the Oaxaca People's Popular Assembly (APPO), through which Oaxaca's historically divided left joined and organized its civil disobedience uprising.

State and federal authorities unleashed brutal acts of repression against both of these movements. On May 3 and 4, police from Mexico State first ambushed a small march of flower vendors in Texcoco, then battled with protesters from neighboring San Salvador Atenco on the highway, and finally joined with thousands of federal police to raid Atenco, brutally clubbing hundreds of people, raping and molesting 45 women, and destroying homes in a targeted act to break one of the most organized members of the Other Campaign, the Atenco's People's Front for Land Defense.

In Oaxaca, state police organized paramilitary attack units and death squads to kill protesters. On Oct. 27, after paramilitaries shot and killed New York Indymedia journalist Brad Will as he filmed the paramilitary attack on a protest barricade, President Vicente Fox, in one of his last acts in office, sent the Federal

Preventive Police (PFP) to Oaxaca to quell the protests. With the cover of the PFP, the state police ramped up their attacks, detaining and torturing protesters across the city and fueling the rage that would lead the protesters to battle with the PFP in the streets and finally, on Nov. 25, fall to the trap of an open battle in the narrow streets of Oaxaca City's historic center. The PFP used tear gas grenades, anti-riot tanks and live fire to push the protesters back into an open avenue and then surround, bear and arrest at least 150 people.

### THREE FORCES

The state repression, popular uprisings and continued decay of institutional legitimacy will most likely dominate the coming years in Mexico. Calderon will most likely do little to battle entrenched corruption, while pushing hard to expand the reach of cartel market economics and slamming down the full force of the state against those who stand up in opposition.

Calderon's first acts in office show an adept public relations campaign coupled with the drive to crush serious resistance movements. During his first week in office, Calderon cut his and his cabinet's salary by ten percent, said he would raise the army's salary (he did not say by how much), set up a project to install basic services in Mexico's 100 poorest towns, grabbed Flavio Sosa (one of the APPO's most public figures) and three other APPO organizers as they were preparing to hold talks with Calderon's minister of the interior and sent hundreds of federal police to round up all the guns at the Oaxaca state police headquarters, supposedly to analyze whether or not they have been used in paramilitary activity.

How the resistance movements will respond to Calderon's heavy-handed style remains to be seen. Will they break out of the model of compliant defiance, of holding endless marches and rallies, to carry out more high-stakes civil disobedience actions such as taking over government buildings and media outlets? Will they expand the vocabulary of non-violent resistance with new unthought-of acts of rebellion?

The APPPO called for a march to protest the arbitrary detentions of its members and continue the push to force Ulises Ruiz's removal from office. The Other Campaign is in the process of conducting a national referendum on the next phase of organizing and preparing a gathering with representatives from international left movements in Chiapas from Dec. 30 to Jan. 2.

After a year of traveling across the country, viewing and listening to those who came to participate in the Other Campaign, those who filled Lopez Obrador's protests against electoral fraud and those who took to the streets in the unarmed uprising in Oaxaca, one thing seems very clear: The underdogs of the Mexican left are standing up and getting ready to fight.



# Landscape of Horrors

## THE OBSCENITY OF REAL WAR

BY A.K. GUPTA

The end of the year means the release of serious films jockeying for Oscar contention. This year, violence and gore play the leading roles in many heavy-weights: *Apocalypto*, *Blood Diamond*, *The Departed* and *Flags of Our Fathers*.

These movies excel in make-believe violence that keeps getting more graphic and extreme over time. Hollywood is forever chasing realism even though we see the movies to escape. No matter how real the bloodletting – the screams of anguish, the reverberations of explosions – we know it's staged.

Yet we block out the real violence in front of us. Even as the Iraq War dominates the news month after month, we have insulated ourselves from it.

Recently, Bob Herbert commented on this in the *New York Times*. He noted that the media images the day after Thanksgiving were of more than 200 Iraqis massacred by car bombs in Sadr City the previous day juxtaposed with “holiday shopping zealots... storming the department store barricades.”

We don't want to know what the war looks like. That's why, when I heard about [nowthatsfuckedup.com](http://nowthatsfuckedup.com) last year, I had to see it. Part of it was voyeurism, but I also wanted to see the sordidness of the Iraq War, the military and America all at once: soldiers trading pictures of war gore for access to amateur pornography.

More than that, I simply wanted to see what the war looked like. I've been writing about the Iraq War for four years running. I've read well over 30,000 articles about Iraq in that time, but the war still seemed distant and antiseptic. I wasn't disappointed.

The website contained hundreds of photos of indescribable mayhem. We've all seen photos of cars and buses turned into twisted, smoldering hulks. But instead of steel, imagine the impact on flesh and bone.

It's not the tidy Hollywood aesthetic, a shot in the forehead leaving a small hole and a trickle of blood. Things explode. Heads are turned inside out like a flower in full bloom, but little is identifiable. Bodies are charred, pulverized, shredded and rent asunder.

In perhaps the most disturbing picture, a bowl holds flesh and blood. A head becomes recognizable but all the features are distorted and mutilated. It dawns on you that the head must be missing the skull, collapsed like a mask in oozing fluids. The photograph is a contradiction: you understand the incomprehensibility of war. What type of violence could leave the hair on a man's head while blowing out his brains and skull?

The name of the website, shut down because it violated “obscenity” laws in Florida (and the webmaster was briefly arrested), makes sense. The juvenile male giddiness, “Now THAT'S Fucked Up!”, a jangly response in extremis.

Critics blanched and dubbed it war porn, which it is, like the Abu Ghraib photos: It's excessive, extremely graphic and displays a

taboo intimacy from camera-eye objectivity – instead of sex, the insides of bodies and acts of torture – that excites many.

The soldiers were admonished for bad taste. The Pentagon's only concern was to caution troops not to publish pictures that might reveal military vulnerabilities. Ditto for the torture shots. War enthusiasts dismissed them as sophomoric hi-jinks or attacked the media for publishing images that serve as a recruiting tool for the enemy.

Social critics from Jean Baudrillard to Susan Sontag dissected the Abu Ghraib war porn. They explained the “obscene banality” of images degrading and trite, and how they revealed the “fundamental corruptions of colonial rule.”

Abu Ghraib has vanished into the memory hole, but the flood of war porn has spread below the radar. The media notice only if it becomes a controversy, such as the decision by YouTube and Google to censor scores of videos of combat footage, including Americans being shot and killed by snipers.

A few years ago I stumbled across a site called “terroristmedia.com.” It sounds like a joke, but in fact links to hundreds of resistance videos from Iraq, many shaky and of poor quality. But they show military operations with horrific consequences for U.S. troops caught unwittingly on camera. Some videos linger over dead Americans and captured war booty.

For the guerrillas, it's proof of their skill, even righteousness, and shows their enemy as vulnerable. It took the media more than three years to start airing these readily available videos, most notably when CNN recently showed excerpts from the sniper videos.

Many Americans were livid that it would broadcast “enemy propaganda.” They didn't want to see what the war looked like. They crave the illusion of a noble war where Iraqis die only at the hands of terrorists and American dead are seen only gift-wrapped in flag-draped coffins, if at all.

We're indifferent to our machinery of death. We cheer the techno porn on innumerable television shows that drool over our high-tech killing machines, but we don't want to see the results of a cruise missile or F-15 strike.

It's there to see, but that's the problem: You have to want to see it, evidence of concern or sadism. A few seconds is all it takes to Google graphic war videos and pictures. Many sites now offer DVD compilations for sale, the perfect stocking stuffer.

The proliferation says a lot about the heart of darkness. New media is always exploited for sex and violence. Vietnam was the first television war. The Gulf War was the first videogame war, and the Iraq War is the first Internet war.

The combination of digital media technology and the web made the flood of unfiltered gore and sadism inevitable. What we see is a trickle. Many soldiers bring back these visual mementos. It's proof of their prowess in combat and an indifference to human life.

It's a mistake to dismiss it just as war porn, as if it's just a deviancy. The photos and videos are a form of desecration, to be



**PEACE ON EARTH:** The website [www.nowthatsfuckedup.com](http://www.nowthatsfuckedup.com) displayed graphic Iraq War photos such as the one above. This is a photo of an Iraqi man killed by American soldier for failing to stop in time at a roadblock. Soldiers in Iraq caused a quiet controversy recently when an underground economy of war photos were being traded for pornography online. [PHOTOSFROMIRAQ.REVOLUTIONWEB.ORG](http://PHOTOSFROMIRAQ.REVOLUTIONWEB.ORG)

laughed over, enjoyed as entertainment or to sate a thirst for vengeance. But it's a small step from digital mementos to actual ones.

If so many soldiers are bringing back virtual souvenirs how many are bringing back war trophies made of flesh and bone? We can dismiss it as savage and primitive, scalps and shrunk heads, but desecrating war dead surely continues today as it has for millennia.

During the Vietnam War many American soldiers collected ears, scalps,

shades of skin and soap from human fat. The primal slugfest between the Japanese and Americans was one of unrelenting brutality. E.B. Sledge describes in his memoirs, *With the Old Breed at Peleliu and Okinawa*, Americans urinating in the mouths of corpses, extracting gold teeth from soldiers still alive and displaying cut-off hands as trophies.

A war correspondent for the *Atlantic Monthly* wrote of how troops “boiled flesh

**We cheer the techno porn on innumerable television shows that**

**drool over our high-tech killing machines, but we don't want to**

**see the results of a cruise missile or F-15 strike.**

gold teeth and hands. A Pulitzer-prize winning investigation by the *Toledo Blade* three years ago revealed the barbarism practiced by an elite unit known as Tiger Force during a seven-month period in 1967.

Sgt. Larry J. Cottingham told Army investigators about collecting body parts: “There was a period when just about everyone had a necklace of ears but as the men were wounded they thought it was bad luck and got rid of them. Scalps were a kick for a time also but there were lice in the hair and they got rid of those too and it didn't last long.”

This was a feature of the “Good War.” The desecration went far beyond lamp-

off enemy skulls to make table ornaments for sweethearts, or carved their bones into letter openers.”

The media are loath to show this; it mars the notion that an oasis of heroic nobility remains in the landscape of horrors. And it is incapable of recreating the stench, filth, disease, rotting corpses, insanity and paralyzing fear of the battlefield. But what it can do is show war unvarnished.

If we saw the obscenities of real war on a regular basis there would be little stomach for it. We couldn't exit the cinematic black box and let the sunlight wash away the images. We might be shocked out of our rollicking consumer orgy.



# Return from the Killing Fields

## NYC WOMAN CONFRONTS HER BROTHER’S ACTIONS IN IRAQ

*Editor’s Note: I first met Leah Larson while covering an antiwar protest in fall of 2003. While most of the crowd around her screamed and chanted, she spoke quietly of her love for her brother, a young Marine, and of her deep sense of dread over what the newly launched Iraq War would do to him. She was as concerned that he would lose his soul as his life and that their relationship would be shattered forever. When I spoke with Leah again this fall, her brother had just returned from a nine-month tour of duty in Iraq and her worst nightmares had been confirmed. Her reflections on what has happened to her family are a reminder that the calamity of war extends far beyond the battlefield. —John Tarleton*

BY LEAH LARSON\*

Two days after he came home from Iraq, my older brother showed me some pictures. “I just bombed that building,” he said. In the photo, children in Fallujah are clustered beside their broken school.

During his first two weeks back, my brother, the demolitions expert, plied me with photos of the carnage and mayhem wreaked by his platoon. Fifteen memory cards worth of bizarre and disturbing photos – half-naked soldiers dancing in the desert, a severed goat’s head in a noose, Marines dressed in traditional women’s clothing found following a house raid.

I wanted to hit him, banish him, to create a giant dent in his soul. But he wouldn’t care, wouldn’t budge. This is what the Marines have trained him to do – warp, destroy and believe it is for good.

### WAR GAMES

My brother can be as sweet as sugarcane with a laugh that pours loudly into your ears. He has a clumsy way of affection, like when he comes home drunk and knocks on my window to tell how much he loves his little sister. He remembers my lopsided pigtails, chicken pox, first kiss, my love for manatees and my favorite vegetarian food. Scarcely two years apart, our experiences are parallel and echo one another, even our experience of war.

We used to play war together. He would dress me as a soldier, paint my face in the colors of Earth and hunt me down before dinnertime. While we are both part Cherokee, our mother says our warrior spirits have gone in different directions. My brother first became my enemy, my pain and my conflict when he enlisted in the military while struggling in his high school’s Special Ed program, where teachers thought him a slow, hopeless, uncontrollable idiot. He often fought with other students who would make fun of his facial features with taunts like “bubba lip don’t trip.”

When recruiters came to take my brother, I howled, groped, twisted, shivered, barely escaping the horrible separation from him. At a young age, long before I recognized politics, my spirit understood many things. I knew that if he joined the military, somehow our kinship would be severed, and it has been. It saddens me when I am unable to hug him because he cannot tolerate affection. Our mother likes to tell stories of when my brother could only be comforted by his GI Joe toys. Lying in the top bunk, while I slept on the bottom, my brother would watch a sky of little green men dangle from the ropes he tied to the ceiling.

Now, instead of green men, my brother keeps metal, wood and crystal beaded crosses in his room. Some hang over pictures of friends killed in the war. Others occupy the bare spaces left on the wall, which are few. Next to a particularly large cross, a picture of the atomic bomb blast in Japan unfurls next to his video games. He goes to the mall, the gym, eats grandma’s meatballs and goes out drinking with friends. He seems to think nothing of his crimes as he makes plans to go to church, as he prepares for his 25th birthday, as he has sex with a woman for the first time in nine months.

Sometimes I stare at the pictures I stole from his sneaker box, the ones that he didn’t want me to see, including one

of a man he killed. It is not tears that come but the impossible question of forgiveness. Brains and blood were once safe and alive in this being. My brother blew open the back of his head and took a picture of the gore coming out. He believes there is a ghost in his room. Sometimes he feels a breath touching on his shoulders and back. I know it is the spirits of those he killed, and helped to kill, following him, reaching for him, asking him their own silent questions.



### MY BROTHER'S SECRET IRAQ WAR PHOTOS:

Leah Larson said her brother took these images on a disposable camera while stationed in Fallujah. Larson said of the top photo: “The kill zone was an area that they marked off – anybody who walked past automatically got shot.”

The second photo is of a school in Fallujah. “It was a school during the day, but people congregated there at night, and he got orders to bomb it,” she said. “So he did.”

Her brother refused to show her some of the images. “He had a few photos of people he killed,” said Larson, who decided to secretly make a copy of this photograph.

Perhaps he surrounds himself with crosses because he knew they would come.

It is only when he is drunk that his guilt emerges from under the amber smog of Jack Daniels. “Sis,” he asked one night, “would you rather have me do whatever I needed to do to come home, or die because I couldn’t do what I needed to do to come home?” In his question lay a plea for forgiveness. Sitting across from him in my room, I didn’t know how to answer. If he had been killed, would that make me support this war? How would I feel toward Iraqis?

My brother’s possible death demented our family. I prepared for it every day, imagining what his funeral would be like and what I would tell my future children about their uncle. It became impossible to live with my parents. My mother’s changing moods left us isolated from each other. My father’s blustering support of the war (“I hope we level that whole damn country of ragheads”) was infuriating.

### A BIRTHDAY TO REMEMBER

My brother’s recent 25th birthday celebration was a breaking point for me. On that night, a bunch of his old friends joined him to mark the occasion. I wanted to be close with everyone, sharing in the celebrations and camaraderie. Before we left for a bar in the city, we clustered into my brother’s room. He began to do his usual flaunting of pictures and videos much to the enjoyment of his friends. I sat farthest from his computer, turning my eyes away from the country he helped destroy. My brother’s friends eventually fell into an awful silence. Moving from my seat, I wanted to see what they were watching.

A young man, who appeared to be in his early 20s, was centered in my brother’s computer screen. The man was blindfolded and sobbing as his head rested on his own knee. Heavy metal music filled the speakers as my brother forced headphones onto his ears. You could hear him laughing while saying, “you’re gonna die,” as my brother pushed the camera into the young man’s face with his left hand and slapped him hard with his right hand. I watched tears of agony escape from the prisoner’s cheeks and fall onto his pants. He was heaving from the suffering. Arabic was pouring out from his mouth. No one understood the words, but I knew he was begging for his life.

I did not stay to see what had happened. My brother’s room remained silent. There was no “Yo, this shit is awesome!” or “You gotta e-mail me this!” I am almost certain the young prisoner was killed, although I did not watch the rest of the video. All these years of trying to balance my hatred for war and the love for my brother immediately tipped to one side. I did not want to be near him anymore. I did not want to go out for his birthday. How could I? The family of the young prisoner likely mourns while I get to party with his abuser. After finishing the video, my brother yelled upstairs to see if his birthday cake was ready.

A few days ago, I asked a mutual childhood friend, who was in my brother’s room that night watching the video, what had happened in the end. His response was, “Who are you with right now? Why are you asking me this? There is no need for an answer so you should forget about it.” I continually wonder why our friends and family protect my brother from the truth of his actions. In this way, he will never consciously recognize the horror of what he has done or begin to heal himself. My brother came home shortly after our childhood friend notified him that I was asking strange questions. He said, “Listen, I don’t want you in my room. I know you’re a protester or whatever but I don’t want no phone calls from any newspapers and crap.”

Someday I’ll find the strength to finish watching the video, but torture or murder, I haven’t yet forgiven my brother for either.

*\*Leah Larson is a pseudonym. She currently teaches troubled teens at a Brooklyn high school.*







# The Future of Protest

The approach of the American power structure to the history of popular struggle is simple: if they can't bury it, they tame it.

Yet despite this whitewash, there has been a resurgence of interest in the Weather Underground – the clandestine organization that bombed the symbols of American imperialism in the 1970s. There have been academic histories, memoirs and even a documentary that found success on the art-house circuit. *Outlaws of America*, a book by Dan Berger, is the best of the lot. Berger provides a sympathetic but critical account, chronicling the stumbling attempts by white, middle-class kids to forge a revolutionary organization within “the heart of Babylon” that operated in solidarity with the damned of the earth.

The Weather Underground formed as a faction within Student for a Democratic Society (SDS) – the largest student left organization in American history – as it headed towards meltdown. They opposed the efforts of the Progressive Labor Party (PLP) to take over SDS, championing the revolutionary potential of the youth counterculture and the black liberation movement. After SDS's collapse, the Weather Underground turned to militant tactics and armed struggle as an underground organization.

One of the strengths of Berger's book is that he puts the actions of the Weather Underground in historical context of state repression and revolutionary ferment rather than judging them with the benefit of hindsight, but this is also one of its weaknesses. He brings out their impressive commitment to solidarity with those caught on the wrong side of imperialism and their unwavering dedication to anti-racism. But while he rakes the group over the coals for their failures to meet their own ideals from opposing sexism within the organization to their later turn to the reductive class analysis they originally opposed, Berger fails to critique them for their effects on the mass movement.

In 1970, the year the Weather Underground formed, over half the college



campuses in the United States struck classes when Nixon invaded Cambodia and other liberation movements came forth. But by the time of the Weather Underground's dissolution in 1976-1977, the radical mass movement was all but dead.

It would be unfair to blame all or even most of this decline on the Weather Underground. Police violence, infiltration and harassment played a far more prominent role. Yet it remains true that, in large part, the crisis of the mass movement was one of leadership and strategy: how do you continue to escalate after mass protests have proven unable to get the goods and stop the war? The Weather Underground's proposed solution drew on faulty analogies to the Cuban revolution. Hundreds of the most committed and experienced leaders from the student movement withdrew themselves from the mass movement to go underground, leaving it in the hands of the liberals and dogmatic Marxists they had opposed. It is unsure whether an anti-imperialist movement capable of contesting power could have been built in the 1970s – though anti-imperialist politics certainly have far more of a resonance with American political traditions and culture than Marxism-Leninism – but by abandoning mass organizing, the Weather Underground ensured that one was not.

—MATT WASSERMAN

support her young child and ease the economic burdens of being isolated from the movement she helped birth.

Younge's essays on the 2004 election prove to be less insightful though still poignant. “This is an election about America and its obsessions, old and new and many are indeed incomprehensible,” he writes. Indeed, many of his American left-wing fans would agree that gay marriage, guns and God are inflated obsessions, but not incomprehensible ones. Gay marriage and abortion are time-tested divisive political tools, and will therefore be forced into the realm of obsession for as long as they prove useful.

A more promising essay features an interview with troubled former *New York Times* journalist Jayson Blair. Younge writes of Blair, who counts his childhood rape and subsequent drug use and mental problems for disconnecting him with reality: “He's never more than five minutes away from a giggle... You are left with the impression that he's barely got started with adulthood.”

After the financial troubles and subse-

quent closure of indie magazine *Clamor*, the left can, thankfully, still *Bitch*. For 10 years the folks at *Bitch* magazine have unapologetically critiqued pop culture from a feminist perspective, with the best compiled in their recent anthology *Bitchfest*. While many left intellectuals eschew pop culture topics such as the Spice Girls and *CosmoGirl*, the editors at *Bitch* deftly recognized that Americans, especially young people, are far more likely to be in touch with Britney Spears than bell hooks, and with MTV than NOW. More than that, the editors at *Bitch* developed a financially sustainable, funny and irreverent outlet for feminist media critique. What ensues in *Bitchfest* are dozens of essays on black feminist metal heads, male bonding, homo-sociality and gay parents going mainstream. In an era where pundits like Ann Coulter and even Camille Paglia utilize feminism for their own gain only to trash it, *Bitch* is a bulwark against other mindless clichés like feminism's eminent death. *Vive Bitch!*

—BENNETT BAUMER



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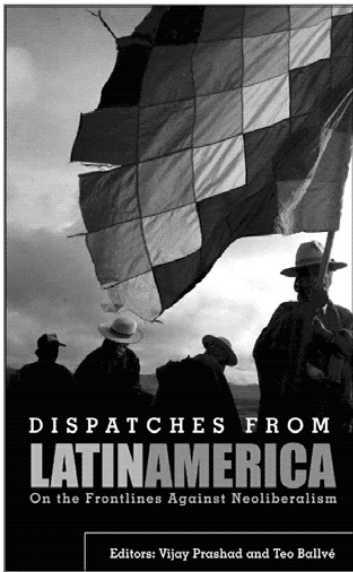
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# movies

## Bloody Bling

BLOOD DIAMOND  
DIR. EDWARD ZWICK, 2006

THE EMPIRE IN AFRICA  
DIR. PHILIPPE DIAZ, 2006

In 1991, in the tiny West African country of Sierra Leone, former army corporal Foday Sankoh and his Revolutionary United Front (RUF) started a military campaign against the corrupt government of President Joseph Saidu Momoh, capturing towns on Liberia's border. The RUF had had enough of seeing ordinary citizens live in misery while the government sold off the country's resources – mainly diamonds – to international interests. For the next 10 years, civil war raged, leaving some 50,000-100,000 dead and tens of thousands more mutilated – and the RUF committed atrocities from rape to enslavement to hacking off victims' limbs. Ahmad Tejan Kabbah was elected president in 1996 and deposed a year later by the RUF-led army. Kabbah returned in 1998, mostly because the British sent in mercenaries from Sandline and Executive Outcomes and the West African community sent its intervention force ECOMOG. Kabbah was re-elected when the war officially ended in 2002 and is still in power. Throughout, the RUF was financed by sales of diamonds through neighboring Liberia. Blood diamonds, also called conflict diamonds, are mined in war zones and sold, usually clandestinely, to finance war efforts.

This is the context for *Blood Diamond*, directed by Edward Zwick. Danny Archer (Leonardo DiCaprio), a Zimbabwean mercenary, arms the RUF in exchange for diamonds. He encounters Solomon Vandy (Djimon Hounsou), a fisherman who finds a rare diamond while working in an RUF mine. Archer convinces Solomon to lead him to the gem in exchange for help finding his family, separated during a rebel attack. What follows is an emotionally wrenching action-packed journey to recover the diamond, with the help of Maddy Bowen (Jennifer Connelly), a seasoned journalist investigating Sierra Leone's war and diamond trade.

The movie is surprisingly well-researched and compelling, exposing the dirty reality behind the glitter of the diamond trade. Despite Warner Brothers' backing and blockbuster marketing, the subject is not one to attract large audiences, especially in a society where many women validate their worth by the carats on their fingers.



JEFF FAERBER

Archer, although himself African, embodies the ghost of white colonialism and its inability to loosen its grip on the continent's resources. With his catchphrase, "TIA" (this is Africa), he explains to Maddy that it's useless to try to change things as Africa will always be embroiled in corruption and war. Solomon doesn't care about politics, dreaming that his son will become a doctor and that "one day this country will be a paradise."

Although the movie focuses on RUF atrocities, there are mentions of governmental corruption and Western involvement. In particular, the film exposes the hiring of mercenary armies, led by Archer's old boss – representing Executive Outcomes – who bomb RUF strongholds indiscriminately.

The movie also discusses the Kimberley Process (KPCS) – a 2002 international diamond trade agreement that certifies the origin of diamonds to prevent the sale of blood diamonds – and explains that it is not fool-proof. To participate in the KPCS, a country must promise not to finance anyone seeking to overthrow a U.N.-recognized government, which doesn't translate to being fair or accountable to its people. Many governments with U.N. recognition enrich themselves at the expense of their citizens, including present-day Sierra Leone, which is at peace but almost as corrupt as before the start of the war. Sierra Leone, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Togo, and Zimbabwe – whose governments all violate human rights – are all KPCS participants.

*Blood Diamond* addresses the complexities of the civil war in Sierra Leone, from the RUF's use

of drugged child soldiers to prisoners forced to work the diamond mines to the plight of refugees – almost a million people fled to U.N. camps in Sierra Leone and neighboring countries. The movie's message is clear throughout: The demand for diamonds in the West is causing diamond dealer heavyweights like De Beers (or Van de Kaap in the film) and their governments to finance wars and atrocities of all kinds simply to increase their bottom line. All of this, right before the biggest shopping season of the year, is making the participant diamond industry so nervous that a website (diamondfacts.org) was created to counter all the negative publicity, and Hollywood publicists and jewelers were barraged with talking points.

*The Empire in Africa*, a new documentary by Philippe Diaz, is a much more violent and one-sided depiction of the Sierra Leone war. Using gratuitous footage of killing scenes, the film attempts to convince viewers that the RUF was wrongly blamed for the atrocities of the war, instead pointing blame at the international community, especially Britain and Executive Outcomes, but also the United Nations and ECOMOG.

To prove his point, the director focuses on the horrors of war, with gruesome scenes of decapitations and exploding heads. These were not Hollywood-staged deaths, but real people being shot and tortured while the camera rolled. Although *The Empire in Africa* shows how U.N. and ECOMOG involvement fueled the war, the film pays no heed to atrocities committed by the RUF and doesn't mention blood diamonds. While the RUF's initial

motivation for challenging the government may have been valid, the rebels lost legitimacy by killing, raping and maiming thousands of civilians.

—VANESSA HRADSKY

## Gibson's Barbarism

APOCALYPTO  
DIR. MEL GIBSON, 2006

Mel Gibson's *Apocalypto* is the work of a supremely gifted 12-year-old boy. This fact is evident from the film's opening scenes which detail, in turn: the gory hunting of a tapir, a tapir-testicle-eating prank, and another prank involving crotch-burning herbs (not to mention that ridiculous title – a lost rap-metal album from 2002?) Clearly, the world's most notorious drunken anti-semite has yet to outgrow the emotional immaturity which has long been a part of his public persona. Ostensibly Gibson's take on the fall of the Mayan civilization, which peeked in what is now Mexico and Central America 1,200 years ago, *Apocalypto* wants to be both a kick-ass action adventure film and a deadly serious parallel to our own civilization's hedonistic decline. The only problem with this is that poor Mel possesses neither the strengths as a filmmaker nor the morally complex world view it takes to pull these contradictory impulses together.

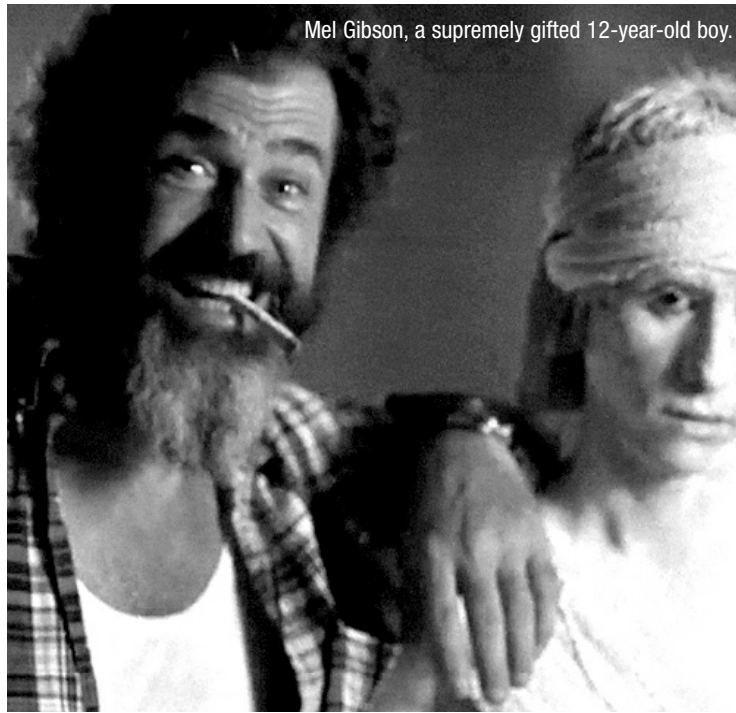
Fleshing out his characters may have helped this, but having tethered his film to an unknown world, Gibson can only manage a handful of universal traits: strength, nobility, chivalry and, naturally, vengeance. Following the prank scenes, a vague but peaceful Mayan

village is overrun by marauding "more civilized" Maya who slaughter, rape and pillage like they're in a Mel Gibson movie. Our barely-introduced hero Jaguar Paw (Rudy Youngblood) lowers his pregnant wife and toddler son into a hiding pit and then watches as his father sacrifices himself to save him. As the rage grows inside, Jaguar Paw marches off to a sacrificial temple, where his friends are all beheaded or speared, before he escapes and sprints home for the remainder of the film with vicious men in hot pursuit.

To give Gibson his due, everything from the sets to the photography to the costumes to the faces of the extras looks astounding. The escape with subsequent chase sequence, lasting half the film, is genuinely gripping, edge-of-your-seat suspense filmmaking. It's all brilliantly shot and cut, but blunt and meaningless: Men rip out still-beating hearts, women give birth standing up, toddlers never cry out in pain, and the hero is endlessly speared until you're either vomiting or giggling at the twisted absurdity of it all.

Thus, at best, the film comes across as a tense, efficient, detailed chase film made by a callous moron with nothing to say about world history, political upheaval or ancient cultures, beyond this: Humans are barbaric. Well, thanks for that, Professor Gibson, but aren't there any rituals worth depicting besides celebratory beheadings? Evidently not for a man whose taste for bloodshed could not even be satiated by flogging the bejesus out of Jesus for two hours in his last film. Indeed, it seems that Gibson's decision to make a film about the Maya was just an excuse to dive deeper into his obsession with extreme violence – to recreate scenes of truly despicable barbarism. To wit: Only in a Gibson film would we see someone not just receive a jaguar to the face, but also watch as said jaguar bites off the guy's mouth. Thank god there weren't any Jews around...

—CHARLIE BASS



Mel Gibson, a supremely gifted 12-year-old boy.



# The Art of Destruction



As a voice of radical politics, ideas and people, *World War 3 Illustrated* is an iconoclast that sticks to underground comics' roots: the social upheavals of the 1960s. Its latest installment, *Unnatural Disasters*, continues the publication's critical stance on political policy and social responsibility, putting it on the fringe of the comics sub-culture.

In *Unnatural Disasters*, comic writers dissect and analyze the pressing theme of a world overrun with environmental catastrophes rooted in business dealings

and government policies. The 19 stories offer a varied catalogue of belligerent and systematic destruction including the U.S. military's use of depleted uranium in the Middle East, the eradication of coral reefs by dumping toxic waste and the rapidly declining numbers of India's vultures. Most of the content addresses the growing threat of global warming and its base in our addiction to oil.

The first story, Nicole Schulman's "Fossil Fuel," shows the author's mastery of scratchboard by effortlessly carving out

fire, bellowing smoke, and sun-bleached bones. Her "It's a matter of time..." is a high point of *Unnatural Disasters*, weaving personal stories of breast cancer with the travails of cancer research. Jennifer Camper's "Garbage is Destiny" is an entertaining and original Kafkaesque story of a post-human world as lived by discriminated rodents and cockroaches, drawn in a cartoony style with stark contrasts. "War is Hell," written by Rebecca Migdal with photos by Sgt. R. marries a debate between friends with unsettling images of the

war in Iraq, creating an unforgettable and immediate story. In "Coming Together," Christopher Cardinale shows his exceptional draftsmanship in such media as paint, scratchboard and pen and ink, with borderless composition that bolsters the stories of misery, community and renewed hope in post-Katrina New Orleans. Each person is rendered with care and intent, creating a look that pulls the reader deeper.

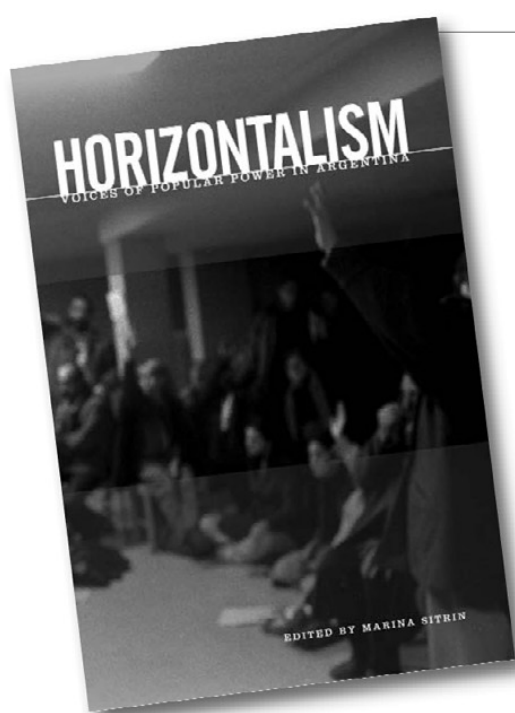
From Mac McGill's poetic stippling to Carlo Quispe's lucid marker renderings to Rebecca Migdal's collage, this anthology

presents a jarring diversity of art styles, easily placing it in the ranks of notable anthologies like *Kramer's Ergot* and *MOME* while offering insight comparable to a radical newspaper's.

Started in 1980 by Peter Kuper and Seth Tobocman, *World War 3 Illustrated* grew into a hub for politically conscious artists and activists. With an impressive roster that includes Eric Drooker, Sabrina Jones and Steve Brodner, the anthology is a pillar of alternative comics, each one confronting a multitude of issues like feminism, media and globalization.

The publication is a loud call for social change, and as such, many of the stories forfeit complexities for a clear political message, making some feel like essays and educational pamphlets. As it stands, *World War 3 Illustrated: Unnatural Disasters* is another affirmation of the anthology's relevance in comics and political discourse and is deserving of a wider read. It makes a reader wish that it came out more often than once a year.

—HUESO TAVERAS



## HORIZONTALISM:

### Voices of Popular Power in Argentina

edited by Marina Sitrin

December 19th and 20th, 2001, marked the beginning of a popular rebellion in Argentina. After IMF policies led to economic meltdown and massive capital flight, millions of Argentineans poured into the streets to protest the freezing of their bank accounts, the devaluing of their currency, and the bankruptcy of their state. This rebellion – of workers and the unemployed, of the middle class and the recently declassed – erupted without leadership or hierarchy, and went on to topple five consecutive national governments in just two weeks. People created hundreds of neighborhood assemblies, involving tens of thousands of active participants. The dozens of occupied factories that existed at the start of the rebellion grew to hundreds, taken over and run directly by workers.

The social movements that exploded in Argentina that December not only transformed the fabric of Argentine society but also highlighted the possibility of a genuinely democratic alternative to global capital. *Horizontalism* is the story of those movements, as told by the men and women who are building them.

"A fascinating account about what is fresh and new about the Argentine uprising."

—John Holloway,  
author of *Change the World Without Taking Power*

"To read this book is to join the crucial conversation taking place within its pages: the inspiring, maddening, joyful cacophony of debate among movements building a genuinely new politics... Marina Sitrin has produced a work that embodies the values and practices it portrays."

—Avi Lewis and Naomi Klein,  
co-creators of *The Take*



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